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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Three Leading Massachusetts Human Service Providers Set to Merge**

*Unified agency to achieve greater impact for individuals and families facing life challenges*

**FRAMINGHAM, MA, June 17, 2024** – [Advocates](#) today announced that it will merge with its two affiliated partner agencies to create one of the most comprehensive human service providers in the state.

On July 1, 2024, [Advocates](#), [Horace Mann Educational Associates, Inc. \(HMEA\)](#) and [Family Continuity](#) will become a single, unified organization operating under the Advocates name.

“Fully merging our three affiliated organizations into one cohesive agency will allow us to provide more comprehensive and coordinated services for people facing a wide range of life challenges,” said Diane Gould, President and CEO, Advocates. “In addition, having one brand identity will make it easier for all community members to have access to and benefit from everything we have to offer.”

The merged organization will serve more than 40,000 children, adults and families in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and employ more than 2500 staff. The majority of employees are essential direct care workers.

“This is exciting news for all individuals and families who need the services and supports provided by these three organizations,” said Jane Ryder, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disabilities. “Having a single agency with a broad range of programs and a strong, visible presence will be a valuable asset to the communities across Central and Eastern Massachusetts that this larger Advocates organization will now serve.”

Advocates provides a broad range of services for people impacted by addiction, aging, autism, brain injury, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and mental health challenges. In addition to residential and day supports, the MetroWest-based agency provides behavioral health services including outpatient counseling and residential supports, emergency psychiatric services, community justice and jail diversion programs, and integrated care management.

“Our organizations share the same values and have talented staff who care about the people they serve and are passionate about the work they do,” said Michelle Donohue, Chief Operating Officer, HMEA. “In addition, we each possess unique strengths and expertise and see lots of potential to learn from one another.”

HMEA brings to the merged organization increased capacity and complementary services in the areas of adult family care; shared living; family supports; day habilitation and employment; and residential programs for people with autism (ASD) and intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). HMEA’s service area extends to over 110 communities in the Central, Southeastern, and Eastern regions of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and includes several well-known programs including [Autism Resource Central](#), an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Clinic, [The Darnell School](#), and [Tech Access of RI](#).

"I am excited about this merger because the diversity and inclusiveness of all three organizations will bring different cultures and talents together," said Teresa Nderitu, Residential Coordinator, HMEA. "Working with the direct care staff, I see expanded opportunities for teamwork, development, and growth that will allow us to enhance the creative solutions we provide to help people live better."

Family Continuity adds its highly respected mental health and substance use services for children, adults, and families across Eastern and Central Massachusetts to Advocates existing programs. Common services include outpatient clinics, peer supports and recovery coaching, jail diversion, and family support. Integrating Family Continuity's programs with Advocates will build long-term sustainability, promote stronger communities, further increase access to care and advance social, racial, economic, and health justice.

"The sensitivity shown by our new colleagues at Advocates and HMEA to the employees and those we serve at Family Continuity has been amazing," said Judy Donahue, Care Coordinator, Behavioral Health Partners of MetroWest & Family Continuity Community Partner Program. "The caring, thoughtful, and respectful way in which this merger process has been conducted gives me great reassurance and confidence that we will achieve great things together."

All of the services currently provided to individuals and families across all three organizations will continue. No services will be eliminated or reduced. The merger will position Advocates to better meet the challenges of the evolving human service system in order to deliver the highest quality of care.

"We're excited about the new opportunities we see for service expansion and innovation to meet the changing needs of the people we support and the expectations of our funders and community partners," said Gould. "Together, as one mission-driven organization, we look forward to providing thousands of individuals and families with the supports they need to lead healthy, productive, and rewarding lives."

For more information, please visit <https://www.advocates.org/>.

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## **About Advocates**

Advocates provides a broad range of services for people facing life challenges such as addiction, aging, autism, brain injury, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and mental health challenges. With Advocates' help, more than 40,000 individuals and families living in Massachusetts and Rhode Island will find the supports they need to lead healthy, productive, and rewarding lives. For more information, visit [www.advocates.org](http://www.advocates.org).